

Garnier Block  
415 North Los Angeles Street  
Los Angeles, Los Angeles County  
California

HABS No. CAL-<sup>2776</sup>~~321~~

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PHOTOGRAPH  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction  
1000 Geary Street  
San Francisco, California

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PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT  
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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GARNIER BLOCK

Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, California

ADDRESS: 415 North Los Angeles Street

OWNER: State of California

USE: Historical Monument, to be developed as an  
hotel facility with appropriate shops.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Garnier Block is now being restored as a part of a complex of buildings south of the Old Plaza called, PUEBLO DE LOS ANGELES STATE HISTORICAL MONUMENT as a cooperative venture between the State of California, the City and County of Los Angeles and El Pueblo de Los Angeles, Inc., a non-profit corporation. Its importance is mainly as a part of this group in the Master Plan for the development of this historical facility.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

This building was built for the Garnier family in 1890 and is named for Phillipe Garnier, the founder of the family in California, who came to Los Angeles from his native France following the discovery of gold. He prospered in real-estate and eventually acquired extensive ranching interests in Los Angeles, as well as building investments. Phillipe Garnier was one of the organizers and original stockholders of the Farmers and Merchants Bank of Los Angeles. He returned to France in 1891 and died there in 1898.<sup>1</sup>

The Garnier Block was originally designed for rental purposes, - offices, shops, etc. - similar to its neighbors of this period. It was built during a period between the failure of the great land boom

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in Los Angeles of 1888 and the next boom which was to follow about 1906. The general architectural trend at this time was a continuation of eastern fashions, locally adapted, and somewhat delayed in their transportation here.<sup>2</sup> These conditions tend to explain the rather medieval or romanesque forms used, faintly reminiscent of Richardson in the rough hewn masonry pilasters, lintels, etc., but with a curious mixture of Baroque pediment over the main entrance, and all locally consistent with the popular brick construction in lieu of the stone masonry of the original inspirations.

Some time after the turn of the century, by now no longer in Garnier hands (a porcelain plaque at the main entrance refers to the Garnier Brothers), and as property values in the neighborhood declined resulting in lower rental income, the building decayed from neglect.<sup>3</sup> By the 1940's the occupants were marginal, and low income renters. However, the second floor was the headquarters of the Chinese Free Masons. A fire in 1949 forced a temporary vacancy of the premises and shortly thereafter the adjacent Hollywood-Santa Ana Freeway construction resulted in about one-half of the building being demolished, southerly from the main entrance.<sup>4</sup> - <sup>5</sup>

The present plans for restoration include a second floor hotel annex to the Old Pico House and a ground floor of related shops and services.

#### REFERENCES

1. California and Californians, edited by Rockwell D. Hunt, The Lewis Publishing Company, Chicago, 1930, Vol. III, p. 335.
2. A Survey of Nineteenth Century Building in Los Angeles, by John L. Connolly, Jr., unpublished MS, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, Fine Arts, 1962.
3. Interview with Mr. Ray Richards, State Division of Architecture, Plaza Restoration, August 26, 1963.
4. Los Angeles Times, May 18, 1949, Part 2, p. 2.
5. A Study of Architecture of the Period 1869-1900 Existing in Los Angeles in 1940, by Frances Burrows Flood, unpublished MS, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, Department of Fine Arts, 1941, p. 39 and Plate 15.

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The current restoration work for this two-story brick and wood frame building (original construction) is in a skeleton state on the interior. Much of the original description is dependent upon the State Division of Architecture for details and materials that have been removed. Current plans do not call for extending the block back to its former size.

Interior and exterior construction is being strengthened to resist seismic forces by generally using reinforced concrete bond beams and let-in piers, adding reinforced concrete back-up walls and interior shear panels, plywood sheathing for floor diaphragms and roofs and the new addition of steel beams and columns for the supporting framework of the interior mezzanine in lieu of original construction. The south end of the building is being extended some 20' beyond where it was cut off by the freeway demolition to allow the full restoration of the triangular pediment at the east cornice and the completion of the full central bay, which will finally be the south corner of the building.

## EXTERIOR

Overall Dimensions: Presently about 80' deep by 100' street frontage.

Wall Construction: Generally of brick; the main facade on Los Angeles Street is divided into bays by rough hewn red sandstone pilasters extending full height; the ground floor is further divided by two hollow, rectangular cast iron columns with a pseudo classic motif, about 6' c.c.; between these columns are shop windows and entrance doors to individual rental units; the columns, which are stamped "Llewellyn Bros., Los Angeles", support iron lintels above which appear to be three deep channels connected together, in turn support a brick second story wall.

Porches: An early photo (before 1940) indicates a metal railed balcony of simple iron rods, two bays wide, at the second floor, next to the last bay at both ends of the building. The flooring is of wood boards on wood joists supported on iron brackets. The

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wood balcony at the last bay shown in the photo of this report is not part of the original design.

Doorways and Doors: Red fir frames; stock paneled doors of approximately 2" thick, some with fixed glazed lights; applied stops. Ground floor shop entrances were of pairs of doors with wood framed transoms above.

Windows: Redwood frames, double-hung sash, narrow rectangular proportions with red sandstone, rough hewn lintels over, spanning about 3'.

Roof: 2 x 6 trussed rafters (Howe type, parallel top and bottom chords) spanning north and south between interior brick partitions, approximately 18', over which was 1x12 straight sheathing and a finish tin sheet roofing with flat crimped seams. In subsequent times, several layers of rolled asphalt sheet roofing had been applied over, however, the tin sheet can still be seen. The roof drains from both longitudinal walls toward the center.

Cornice: The most distinctive feature of this structure is a corbeled parapet and cornice and studded brick friezes between the pilasters, three end bays at both the north and south were of uniform height, while the central bay featured a large triangular pediment of red sandstone, projecting above the parapet in which could be seen, in relief, letters at the apex "1890" and below "P. Garnier"; this was flanked by scrolls and a rusticated sandstone "torch handle" applied over the adjacent pilasters.

Miscellaneous: The main entrance from Los Angeles Street, located in the central ground floor bay, featured a segmental pediment (still virtually intact) of carved red sandstone employing a Baroque design with incised herald and floral motifs, all supported on sandstone brackets and pilasters.

## INTERIOR

Floor Plan: A rectangular form of originally some 200' with long

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axis north and south, with main facade fronting on Los Angeles Street and the rear on an alley separating it from the Old Pico House.

The ground floor was entered from the main entrance in the central bay which led to a 6' wide stairway, up to the second floor. Beyond (now the south end) was a wide hallway over 18' in height, which is now being restored to its original design to include a mezzanine promenade that will give an open view into the central hall, both running the length of the building. The ground floor units which flank this hall open into it; those fronting on Los Angeles Street have, therefore, two entrances and are about 18' in width (between brick partitions that are back of the exterior pilasters). Those fronting on the alley are reached by the hall only.

The main entrance in what was once the central bay on the east led to the second floor hall. There were also minor stairs at the north and south ends. This hall is notable for its 20' high sky-lighted ceiling which is to be restored. Again, rental units flanked the hall on both sides, but present plans call for this floor to be remodeled as an hotel annex to the Pico House. There is a basement under the full first floor.

Flooring: Originally 1x6 (7/8" x 5 1/2") Douglas fir T&G boards, rough on the down side, smooth on top, was typical, on full 2" thick by 15 1/2" wood joists running north and south, spanning 18' between the afore-mentioned brick interior partitions. The first floor joists are supported below in the basement by wood girders, posts on concrete piers. New plywood sheathing is being used.

Walls: Brick partitions, dividing bays of rental units, in the lateral direction; minor partitions are assumed to have been wood stud framed, wood lathed and plastered. At present, restoration work has progressed to 2 x \_ studding at the second floor.

Ceilings: Assumed wood lath and plaster applied over joists and second floor trussed rafters. (None at present)

Doorways and Doors: Fir frames, paneled stock doors, applied stops.

Trim: Mainly Douglas fir.

Hardware: Typical surfaced mounted latchsets, porcelain knobs, cast iron hinges; some will be original and some will be new.

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DATE: *March 1964*